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## DULCIE'S DELUSION.

IN FIVE CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

BEYOND the Quartier Latin, beyond the winding, noisy, picturesque length of the vagabond Rue St Jacques, on the other side of the newest demolitions, and the starkest Boulevards of Paris, which one names now with mingled pain and awe, at a great height of the Parnassus precinct, in a quiet street abounding in blank walls and flat doors, and in wholesome vicinity to the tanneries, there stands a large quaint old house. It is hidden behind the highest of the blank walls, and it is approached by the flattest and palest of the flat and pale doors, which latter is garnished with a loud resounding bell, whose handle rests in a huge metal socket, like Manbrino's helmet, when it belonged to the barber, with the legend *locataires* underneath it, executed in an irregular and amateur fashion. Outside that gate, things are squalid and depressing; and in the time when Dulcie lived inside it, in the remote days of the Second Empire, say three years ago, for some people like accuracy in ancient history, there were suggestions about of popular politics, of the proletariat, and the paternal watchfulness of M. Pietri. Inside the gate, it became difficult to believe that a city had any existence near. The house, the *cour*, the flower-garden and *pelouse*, the hedges, the acacias, the sycamores, and the lime trees, the little bubbling fountain, and the prim lodge of the *conciierge*, where Madame Constant knitted perpetually, with a troubled brow, and a hurried way with her hands, as though she were pursued by a sense of the fugitive nature of time: these all seemed to belong exclusively to themselves. There might have been nothing else under the high bright blue sky, which sent such golden light down upon the irregular leaden roof of the three sides of a square, in which form the house was built, with the queer leaden-cased windows in it, and the pierced turret, combining the convenience of a pigeon-cot with the dignity and advantages of a weather-cock, which fronted the gate on the

opposite side. Judging from the age and size of the trees irregularly dispersed about the little enclosure, and growing in some instances so close to the windows, that one's book or writing-paper would be dappled all over by shadows of their leaves as they rustled and whispered, the house must have been a peaceful place always—never, at any period since it was built, suffering in the disturbances chronicled in the ancient history aforesaid.

If it had ever belonged to people of importance, it was long before Dulcie went to live there, for its proprietor and its inmates at that time were people of no importance whatever, and all the life inside the blank wall and the flat pale gate was most completely prosaic. It was, as we should say in England, a lodging-house, only that Madame Dervaux, who had certain clerical relatives, a fact of which she was very proud, as they were of the higher clergy, and who affected a quasi-conventionalism in her arrangements, did not occupy herself in any way with her *locataires*, and that the *locataires* did their cooking in their own apartments, each set being skilfully fitted with a decent little kitchen. A flagged path divided the house from the quaint sunny garden, and on its uneven surface sundry wooden benches were placed, free to the *locataires*, who might thus avail themselves of the garden, and cultivate each other's acquaintance if they chose. Being civilised, polite, friendly, and, with two exceptions, French people, they did choose; and on summer evenings the garden was wont to present quite a lively scene, considering that Madame Dervaux's *locataires*, who read, and worked, and chatted there, were all women, and single women. Their number was six, and they were not all old maids, though, if they had been, they might have been just as pleasant together, as female celibacy is almost invariably voluntary in France, and consequently not so much calculated to act upon the temper. Two were widows, and one was a young maid, who, if she should select celibacy, would undeniably inflict an injury upon mankind—no other than Dulcie, in short; and one of the widows was

Dulcie's mother. A short, slight, delicate woman, with fine features, and silver-white hair, which had no right conferred by years to be anything but raven black, like the lock which once made part of it, but had long lain in the earth of the English cemetery at Scutari, on the gallant dead breast of Captain Terence O'Connor, her husband, and the father of Dulcie, otherwise Dulcimer, who was the only daughter of the youthful, soon-severed pair. A woman with a patient, steadfast, but always grieving face, and such fragility about her whole appearance as amply justified Madame Dervaux's curiosity with regard to Dulcie's prospects, in case 'the little mother' should be called away to join M. le Capitaine, and Madame Constant's frequent injunctions to Dulcie to *soigner bien* the little mother, and be unremitting in the administration of *tisane*.

In the event of the little mother's getting the route supposed, Dulcie's prospects would have as little brilliance as the most desponding might surmise. If they had been better, the little mother would have been altogether thankful for such a summons; even as they were, she could not quite keep from longing for it, for she was the loneliest of widows, the most thoroughly done with life on her own account. An orphan girl and a governess when Terence O'Connor, with nothing but his pay in a line regiment, and expectations which he forfeited by his love-match, married her, his death left her with a slender pension and her little girl. The child was four years old when Lieutenant Terence O'Connor went with his regiment to that Russian war, now so remote an event in the ancient history aforesaid, and reduced to such small dimensions. It hurt a great many men and women mortally, however, and among them, Terence O'Connor and his young wife. Their parting had been as brave as his utmost strength could make it, and among his last words were these:

'If you ever have any communication with my uncle, let him know we called the child after him. It is a queer name for a girl, and though it won't prevent any number of the young lady's brothers having the same, in—in case you should have a chance of touching the old fellow's heart—it is a good one, Mary, in spite of appearances. Be sure to let him know we did not wait for a boy.'

'I will,' said Mary simply, thinking with a pang that he was contriving a means for her, in case of the worst the war could bring to her, of making an appeal to the merciful consideration of his estranged relative on behalf of his child.

'He knows that I should never need it, that I could not live if he were gone,' she thought, with the inexperience of youth, to which it seems always so simple and easy to get out of trouble, when one cannot get over it.

The captain's death—it was not the sweet and decorous death the military tombstones tell us of, but a slow wasting by fever and privation—was simply notified by his widow to Sir John Dulcimer, with this addition to the fact and date, 'leaving one daughter, Dulcimer O'Connor, aged four years.' Mrs O'Connor received no reply to this communication, but that did not add to her grief. Nothing could have added to it; and perhaps it was even a little alleviated by the pressing need of exertion which soon made itself felt, when the

young widow found that the blow was not mortal. She had but the pension of a captain's widow—her husband's promotion had come to him on the field of battle, and though that would have sufficed for her and the child, in the entire solitude which would have been the most bearable form of existence to her, it would cease with her life, and she must earn some money somehow for Dulcie, when she should be dead.

Poor Terence's Mary felt a great pang at the heart the first time she played the music which had been so dear to him, the music to which he had sung, the music to which they had danced, when first they met, in a large cheerful Irish country-house, where the governess was one of 'the girls,' and they were all merry and light-hearted together. But she had to go back to it. Music was her chief accomplishment, and its employment the only means she could discern for the fulfilment of her purpose. She had the usual difficulties to surmount which lie in the way of women who want to earn money; but, as she was not absolutely destitute, and had the power of moving from one place, after an unsuccessful attempt, to another where she might succeed, she was not completely beaten in the struggle. Her child lived and prospered, responding with the eagerness of a fine intellectual nature to the efforts made by her mother to procure for her a far better education than her own had been, and remarkable for a delicately lovely face, and an imaginative, enthusiastic temperament.

Mrs O'Connor had found her way to Paris when Dulcie was fourteen years old, in the train of a lady to whose daughters she had been music-mistress for some time, and who was so valuable a patroness that the gentle little widow did as she desired her when this lady proposed her 'breaking new ground' in Paris under her auspices, while continuing her instructions to her daughters. The experiment succeeded tolerably; the music-mistress's manners were pleasing, her *distinction* was a recommendation; and Dulcie and her little mother were established comfortably, and in no wise ill off, in the quaint old house beyond the Rue St Jacques, where Mary O'Connor journeyed every day in an omnibus from the Barrier La Glacière to her task of teaching music in the better known and more sightly quarters of the beautiful city. She would return in time to call for Dulcie, who was an *externe* pupil at a conventual school of high repute; and the two would go home together to the quiet house in the quaint garden, among the limes, the acacias, and the sycamores, which was a little world to the young girl, and a restful place enough to the widow, who had but one object in life, and needed no 'distraction.'

There was really very little difference between Dulcie's life and that of her *internes* schoolfellows, who envied her the daily return to her home. It was as unvarying, as well cared for, and as little independent. But Dulcie had her mother's gentle presence, and constant love and approbation, and she highly appreciated that great difference. Mrs O'Connor was a quiet little woman, in whose reserve of character there was nothing stern; but yet it was a fact that no one knew much about her. Madame Dervaux, the *propriétaire*, had no reason to complain; her rent was punctually paid, and all the conditions of residence faithfully fulfilled. Madame Dervaux regarded her locataires as persons

highly privileged indeed; but if Mrs O'Connor had been a conspirator, she could not have been more silent in all but general topics; and the extreme exactness of her expenditure, extending to a penurious economy in everything except where Dulcie was concerned, was rather trying. Madame Dervaux and her other locataires possessed in common that love of dress which is a harmless solace of female life; and it was vexatious that Mrs O'Connor never afforded them an opportunity of indulging it disinterestedly in her instance. A monotonous black walking-dress and bonnet, an unchanging black house-dress, and frightful English widow's cap—such were the components of the little mother's costume, and the locataires resented it. It was the only thing they had to resent in Mary O'Connor, who was reserved simply because she had nothing to tell, and who dressed in a humble, unchanging fashion, because she would not expend a franc on herself out of the money which was to be Dulcie's, when she should be dead. It was so little, so very little—not enough to *dote* her child, if she should marry a Frenchman; not enough to keep her from the necessity of working, if she remained single; but something to begin with, something 'against a rainy day,' as they used to say in Ireland, where surely the precept must be of perpetual application. A very little money, then, and a very few friends, if she might venture so to call them, Mary O'Connor should be able to leave to her daughter, when the time should come, which she began to feel coming just as Dulcie completed her seventeenth year, and presented a picture of girlish loveliness, which the locataires regarded with genuine admiration honourable to them. Then it was that Madame Dervaux began to speculate upon Dulcie's prospects; and that Madame Constant, in intervals of knitting, impressed on her the need to *soigner bien* the little mother, and to be unremitting in the administration of tisane.

But care and tisane were destined to be unavailing. Dulcie was not to be long blessed with the care and the love of the gentle little mother. Mrs O'Connor was an intelligent woman, even clever in her way; but she had no 'business' faculties, and she shared with the majority of her sex a rooted unbelief in public funds, and an obstinate credulity in private undertakings. She had not expended a shilling of her earnings in all these years; she had rigidly lived upon her pension, which, by eking out the school charges by giving music-lessons at the convent, she had made to serve the purposes of Dulcie's education also; and the whole of these savings she had confided to a *notaire* in Paris, by name M. Dejaset, by whom she had had her will drawn up, and in whom she placed absolute confidence. Dulcie had never seen this personage. Her mother's visits to him were made privately; and as one of her favourite hopes was to keep her daughter free from the dread as well as from the experience of want, she had never admitted her to a knowledge of her money troubles, or in any way permitted her to be overshadowed by her cares. The example of her strict frugality and self-denial had not indeed been lost on Dulcie; but she had not thoroughly comprehended their motive and their need.

One day, in the early autumn, when Mrs O'Connor's pupils were preparing for their excursions to the *bains de mer*, which Parisians take

after a serious and business-like fashion, imitated but feebly by British bathers, and the little mother was also looking forward to her yearly holiday, which, however, did not carry her out of Paris, but merely enabled her to indulge Dulcie with some of the sights of the beautiful city and its delightful suburbs—she did not go as usual to bring Dulcie from the convent. A few days more, and Dulcie's school-time would be over; and though for her, in her humble homely prospects, there was no 'coming out' included, the girl felt that it was a great event. Only another week, and she should be always at home; and then she should be able to carry out certain projects for helping the little mother which had been forming themselves in her young brain, and animating the spirited perseverance with which she had worked during the last year of her school-life.

It was growing late, and Mrs O'Connor did not arrive. Dulcie was sent home under the charge of a conventual sister, who left her in the porter's lodge, where Madame Constant was knitting as usual against time. Dulcie inquired about her mother.

Madame had been in some time. Madame Constant was quite sure she had not gone out again; indeed, no one had passed through the gate since Madame Constant herself had taken a letter, brought by a *commissionnaire*, to Madame O'Connor's apartment.

Giving Madame Constant a gay nod, Dulcie ran along the flagged path beside the house on the right, and entered by a queer little door, half glazed, which hid itself away oddly in an angle of the wall, a red-tiled passage leading to their apartment, and opening directly by a second half-glazed door upon the trim little *salon*. Her mother was not there. Dulcie crossed the room, calling to her, and entered a beautifully neat white room, through whose open window a leaf-scented autumnal air was stealing, and on whose pink and white walls the sun glinted. An arm-chair, covered with the inevitable white dimity, red bordered, of a French bedroom of the *garni* class, was close to the bed, at which Dulcie glanced in the first instance, thinking her mother might have lain down there; but there was nothing visible but two dints in the coverlet, as if made by the elbows of some one who had long knelt beside the small white bed. In an instant, Dulcie saw her mother seated in the chair, leaning back, her head slightly forward, and her arms easily extended at either side. She was looking towards the door, and Dulcie thought she caught her eye as she entered, exclaiming: 'Mother, dear, are you ill? Could you not come for me?'

But, somehow, Dulcie had not caught the little mother's eye—the face remained unchanged, the glance eluded hers; and when, with a sudden spring, and a wild awful scream, which brought the locataires in a body into the red-tiled passage, the wretched girl reached the little mother's side, and flung her arms around her, it was plain, even to Dulcie's inexperience, that she had been some time dead.

'Was there any sudden shock that you know of?' asked the doctor, who was on the spot in five minutes after Dulcie's scream had given the alarm—'anything to account for this sudden seizure?'

'Madame O'Connor received a letter, brought by a *commissionnaire* this afternoon: this is the letter—it was in her right hand,' said Madame Dervaux.

'And—Mademoiselle being quite insensible—I considered it not indiscreet to read it.'

'Certainly,' said the doctor gravely; 'you were quite in the right in doing so. Do the contents throw any light upon this melancholy occurrence?'

'Will M. le Docteur read the letter for himself? He will be a much better judge than I.'

The doctor and Madame Dervaux, pending the arrival of the proper authorities, and the drawing up of the *procès-verbal*, were standing by the white bed on which the placid form of the little mother had been laid. Dulcie, in a condition of merciful lethargy, had been removed to an adjoining room, under the charge of the locataires and Madame Constant.

The contents of the letter found in the dead hand of Mary O'Connor, were, being translated from the French tongue, as follows:

AU HAYRE, — 186—.

MADAME—If I have any penetration, any knowledge of character, and have not exercised it in vain in your regard, I feel convinced that I may calculate upon your consideration, upon that exaltation of soul to which misfortune is not suffered to appeal without receiving the divine response of sympathy. I am about to make that appeal; permit me, Madame, to give utterance to the confidence with which I expect and await that response. I am a sufferer—a sufferer in consequence of misplaced trust in my fellow-beings; finding practical expression in placing in their hands my own property, and that of others, to one of so much delicacy as, without vanity, I may declare myself possessed of—a deposit far more valuable and important. How has this rash belief in human honour and in the financial talent of mankind been recompensed? Alas, Madame, by the rude awakening from a dream; by the dispersion of a sweet delusion; by finding myself a ruined man, deprived of those honest gains which should have given ease, if not luxury, to the evening of my life; and by the painful consciousness that my desire of usefulness to my fellows is also frustrated. But for the dishonesty of a trusted friend, but for an unfortunate combination of circumstances, the sum which you, Madame, placed in my hands, would have been doubled, and restored to you in imposing dimensions. Such was my earnest desire—such my delicious anticipation. But the decrees of fate and the designs of scoundrels are alike inscrutable, and I am dis-illusioned, disappointed, and ruined. Nothing remains to me of my own fortune or of those moneys placed in my hands by my clients, among whom, Madame, I am proud to include you, and at this moment of misfortune, to declare myself deeply touched by your confidence. I seek a home and a career in another land, untainted by the disgust which I am forced to entertain for France, where my generous credulity has been imposed upon, and the best instincts of a noble nature—a nature inherited from my mother, from whose tomb I have torn myself with tears which no other emotion could have forced from my eyes—have been betrayed.

Adieu, Madame. In an hour, I shall have bidden farewell to France, to the illusions of youth and the hopes of manhood. I shall carry with me the sweet security of your sympathy.—Receive, once more, Madame, I must say for the last time (for old associations must henceforth have

no existence for one so unhappy), the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

DEJAZET (NICOLAS).

This time the blow was fatal. It killed Mary O'Connor, now that youth and strength had left her; and worse than the worst her fears had ever prefigured of her child's possible fate had come to pass. The little mother had received her quarter's pension two days before her death; and fifteen pounds which remained of it, with a similar sum due to her from certain pupils, was the amount of ammunition with which Dulcie stood provided when she found herself thus forced to go to the front in the battle of life.

#### MONEY-MAKING ON TOWER HILL.

WHEN the Normans took England in hand, they discarded the brass coinage of the Saxons, and made silver alone suffice for the nation's monetary needs. Gold, now the sole standard of value, was not brought into use until the reign of Henry III., when pieces of pure gold were coined. Edward III. introduced a modest modicum of alloy—just half a grain in twenty-four carats; Henry VIII. reduced the standard to twenty parts gold to four of inferior metal, but at the same time issued gold crowns containing only one-twelfth of alloy; and after many changes, this crown gold, as it was called, became, after the Restoration, the fixed standard for gold money, and has remained so to the present time.

The annual issue of gold coin from the Mint averages about five millions of pounds sterling; but the amount varies considerably year by year; thus, the largest issue during the last ten years took place in 1864, when it reached the high figure of £9,535,597, in curious contrast to the out-turn of 1867, amounting only to £496,397. In this decennial period, 13,213,301 ounces of gold were transformed into 56,444,506 pieces of money, in the shape of 45,454,082 sovereigns, and 11,990,424 half-sovereigns, of the total value of £51,449,294. Nominally, four denominations of gold coin exist; but the five-pound and two-pound pieces, although still legal current coins of the realm, are practically as defunct as the three-pound, guinea, half-guinea, and seven-shilling piece—the standard coinage of the kingdom being represented by but two coins—the sovereign and half-sovereign. Of these, 2,769,732 pound-worth were struck in the course of last year, in the proportion of 2,189,960 of the higher to 579,772 of the lower denomination; while a coinage of six and a half millions is now in progress. This issue will be notable for the reappearance, after half a century's absence, of Pistrucci's St George and the Dragon, originally adopted for the reverse of the sovereign, when that coin was first struck in 1817. On the new sovereigns, this reverse appears in combination with William Wyon's effigy of the Queen. It were preposterously unreasonable to have expected an obverse bearing some resemblance to the royal lady concerned, since it seems to be a Mint maxim that kings and queens never grow older when once they have donned the crown; let us be thankful for new old-pattern sovereigns, for, as the Deputy-master of the Mint says, 'it is hardly possible to over-rate the advantages accruing to a coinage from an artistic and well-executed design. Apart from the beauty given to the coins themselves, a



good design offers great, and sometimes insuperable obstacles to attempts at fraudulent imitations, and forms, therefore, a safeguard to the coinage generally.

In 1661, much difficulty was experienced for want of specie, by reason of the excessive exportation of gold coin; and in order to encourage private individuals to bring in bullion for coinage, it was resolved that no charge should thenceforth be made for any minting operation; and since that time the coinage of gold has been free. In old times, the crown would seem to have borne the loss arising from the withdrawal of worn coin from circulation. Henry VI.'s well-named Master of the Mint, Bartholomew Goldbeter, pathetically complained that the losses in the loss of weight were insupportable; and in the reign of his successor, it was ordained that gold nobles should not be refused on account of having lost weight in wear, but that the value of the lackage should be paid in silver coin. The average life of a modern sovereign is calculated at eighteen, of a half-sovereign at ten years; in which time they have lost respectively three-quarters and half a grain of gold, and are no longer legally current. Practically, the coins do duty a great deal longer, although the Coinage Act declares that when any of the gold coin of the realm has fallen below the current weight, or has been called in by proclamation, 'every person shall, by himself or others, cut, break, or deface any such coin tendered to him in payment, and the person tendering the same shall bear the loss.' No penalty, however, is attached to disobedience; so, as might be expected, only the Bank of England and a certain number of other banks and public bodies comply with the act; and, consequently, illegal sovereigns and half-sovereigns continue to pass from hand to hand at something above their intrinsic value, until chance conducts them to the fatal counter, and official shears cut short their lawless career.

Until lately, the Mint only received light coin in the shape of bars, for which it paid at the rate of L.3, 17s. 10½d. per ounce; so that before it could get old sovereigns exchanged for new ones, the Bank of England was obliged to melt the coins down; and in order to recoup itself for the loss and expense of remelting and reassaying, required a margin of twopence-halfpenny an ounce; so the general public had to be content with receiving L.3, 17s. 6½d. per ounce for light gold—a loss of fourpence an ounce upon the nominal value of the money. Upon the passing of the Coinage Act, the directors of the Bank suggested that if the Mint would take light coin as such by weight, accepting their own impression of the Queen's head as sufficient evidence of the quality of the defaced coin, much needless expense would be saved, and the Bank be enabled to allow the public L.3, 17s. 9d. per ounce for light coin; only retaining three-halfpence per ounce as compensation for the advance of its capital, and the maintenance of its costly establishment and machinery in connection with the metallic currency. The suggestion was adopted, in the hope that the circulation might be relieved of its superabundance of light coin within a reasonable time, and a more exact approach to the standard weight be secured for the future. In five months, the Mint received worn gold money of the value of L.590,000, or a rate of a little over a million and a half a year; while, taking the

amount of the gold circulation of the country at eighty millions, made up of sixty-eight millions of sovereigns, and twenty-four millions of half-sovereigns, according to the official estimate, there should be 3,777,777 sovereigns and 2,400,000 half-sovereigns withdrawn from circulation every twelve months, to be replaced by new coins. Now, the cost of producing a sovereign, at the present rate of production, is about three-farthings; if the annual turn-out were increased to ten millions, it would be just a halfpenny. At that rate, the annual renewals would cost L.12,870, making, with the loss of value by wear, L.48,870. Taking these items in conjunction with the original cost of manufacture, it appears that the entire gold coinage of the realm might be manufactured and maintained in good condition for ever at a cost of L.1, 13s. 6d. for every hundred pound-worth of coin, if the relative proportion of sovereigns and half-sovereigns remained unaltered.

While the Mint is open, and in fact is bound, to receive gold bullion from any one, and return the same weight in coin, it depends entirely upon the Bank of England for its supply; importers of the precious metal preferring to sacrifice the difference between Mint price and bank price, rather than incur the loss of time involved in waiting for its conversion into coin. It is convenient to every one concerned that it should be so, since, as Mr Forbes puts it, the Bank, having its finger on the pulse of the kingdom, is in a position to keep the authorities informed of the ebb and flow of the currency, and thereby to regulate the supply according to the wants of the time. It is the same with regard to the silver currency: when there is a superabundance of silver in any part of the country, it finds its way into the coffers of the country bankers, who relieve themselves by forwarding it to their London agents, and they in their turn send it to Threadneedle Street; while, should silver be scarce anywhere, the bankers are the first to become aware of the fact, and draw upon the Bank of England until the deficiency is made good.

Since 1816, the silver coinage has been only a subsidiary currency, issued by the state for the public convenience at a profit to itself; its current value being fixed sufficiently above its intrinsic worth to allow the state to reap a profit of nine per cent.—in the last ten years, the Exchequer has received L.153,163 from this source, upon an annual average issue of silver money amounting to two hundred thousand pounds. Excluding Her Majesty's Maundy moneys, of which silver penny, twopenny, threepenny, and fourpenny pieces are coined every year, we have seven denominations of silver coins—the crown, half-crown, florin, shilling, sixpence, groat, and threepenny piece. Of these, three are doomed to early extinction; no crowns or half-crowns having been issued for twenty years, and no fourpenny pieces since 1856. The last two familiar coins will be much missed by the great mass of the British public; and if a popular vote could be taken on the question of half-crown and fourpenny *versus* florin and threepenny, we fancy the result would run counter to the decision of the powers that be. Neither of the Mint-favoured pieces have been taken to very kindly by the general body of the people; and although the florin has been in existence for above twenty years, its proper name is still strange to their tongues—they only recognise it as a

two-shilling piece. Certainly, the abolition of the crown and half-crown will leave a very wide gap in the coinage, that might, we think, be usefully filled by the introduction of a four-shilling piece of a convenient size, about which there need hardly be much difficulty, since there is no longer any question of intrinsic value to render bulkiness a necessity. In the ten years ending 1870, there were coined 10,321,740 florins, 26,464,680 shillings, 16,972,560 sixpences, and 13,984,080 threepences: altogether, including the Maundy money in the calculation, 68,231,134 pieces of money, representing a nominal value of £2,957,940, were in that time produced from 10,756,147 ounces of standard silver, containing seven and a half per cent. of alloy. As the crown makes a profit out of the silver coinage, it takes back the used-up members of it at their original valuation, the Bank of England sorting out or 'garbling' the shillings and sixpences paid into its till, and sending them periodically to the Mint, which has in this way, in ten years, obtained possession of 3,548,326 ounces of worn silver, of the nominal value of £1,131,900, and the Mint value of £975,789—showing a loss of £156,111, or an average of fifteen thousand pounds per annum.

Besides losing value by fair wear and tear, the coinage suffers deterioration at the hands of nefarious practitioners. Coin-clipping, which the severest of punishments failed to check, received its death-blow by the introduction of milled money; but skilful rogues manage, by the aid of the galvanic battery, to enrich themselves at the public expense by removing a portion of the metal from gold pieces. Working-jewellers, too, make away with large quantities of sovereigns, being able thus to obtain without trouble metal of a known standard. It is, however, satisfactory to know that counterfeiting is not practised to any serious extent, so far as concerns the coins of highest worth, in consequence of the difficulty of producing spurious coins that do not convict themselves by want of weight; the only known successful imitation of the sovereign being one made of platinum covered with a film of gold. It is a much easier matter to produce counterfeit silver money, and for this purpose an easily fusible alloy, of which lead is the base, is generally used; but iron is sometimes employed for the sake of the 'ring.'

After being employed as a monetary metal for nearly two hundred years, copper was, in 1860, superseded by a compound of ninety-five per cent. of copper, four per cent. of tin, and one per cent. of zinc—a very profitable change for the public exchequer. Of this 'bronze' coinage, 1,045,180 pound-worth (nominal value) had been struck by the end of last year, of which some twenty-one thousand pound-worth remained in store. When the bronze coinage was first put in hand, the aid of two Birmingham firms was required, and between them they turned out from seventeen to eighteen tons weight of the new coins; but, since 1863, the Mint has been able to supply the public wants itself. In the last ten years, no less than 2415 tons of 'bronze' have been worked up in the production of 152,032,280 pennies, 155,366,400 halfpence, and 48,217,908 farthings; or 355,616,588 coins, representing £1,007,378. 'Owing to special circumstances,' says the official Report, 'it has been found necessary, since 1868, to suspend the issue of bronze pence and halfpence in the metropolitan

district. It is the habit of large brewing firms to relieve the publicans who are their customers of the small silver coins and bronze money which the latter are constantly receiving, without the intervention of a banker or other agent; and it follows that very large amounts of both threepenny-pieces and bronze coins are constantly liable to accumulate in their hands. To obviate the inconvenience which would periodically arise from this cause, the Mint has willingly requested persons applying to it for these coins to obtain them from such firms as were known to hold an undue quantity of them; and the circulation has, by this means, been kept in a satisfactory condition. There is no doubt, however, that a constant accumulation of the bronze coinage by firms engaged in a very extensive business entails upon them considerable loss, by obliging them to dispose of large quantities at a discount to pawnbrokers and others who may require it.'

The old copper money ceased to be legally passable on the last day of 1869; and in order to quicken the withdrawal of it from circulation, a premium of two per cent. was allowed upon all consignments to the Mint up to that date, and it is still received at its nominal value; but it is evident that the operation has not yet been completed, for, in 1870, old copper money was returned to Tower Hill of the value of £6736; making the total amount withdrawn since its supersession £539,449, 6s. 9d. If the quantity received has not been so great as it should have been, it has been sufficiently large to be a nuisance to those who have to take charge of it; for, although the Mint has used it for the bronze coinage since 1861, and also for alloying the silver coinage, there are yet two hundred and thirty-six tons of the discarded coins waiting to be turned to account.

A vast deal of useful work was accomplished by Her Majesty's Mint in the year 1870. Besides coining a fair quantity of sovereigns, half-sovereigns, florins, shillings, sixpences, threepences, pence, halfpence, and Maundy money for home use, it supplied the Canadians with silver fifty, twenty-five, ten, and five cent. pieces to the tune of £156,250; and the people of Newfoundland with similar coins and two-dollar gold pieces worth £12,500; coined a thousand pound-worth of bronze pence and halfpence for Jersey; and the same amount of nickel pence and halfpence for Jamaica—making the twelvemonth's out-turn 24,339,621 coins, of the nominal value of £3,182,958. The die department was unusually active, not only in the production of new dies, and the renewing of old ones for the British coinage, but making five hundred pair of dies for colonial purposes; dies, punches, and matrices for the service of the governments of Japan and Uruguay; and thirty medal dies, besides a new one for the Copley medal of the Royal Society. Fourteen hundred and fifty war medals for the army and navy, and gold medals for the University of London, figure also in the return of the year's operations; while, during the same period, the whole establishment of the Mint has been overhauled and reorganised, the staff reduced, the workmen placed in a better position, various improvements in minting operations have been effected, foreign mints inspected, and last, but not least, the troublesome question of brittle gold set at rest for once and all. The

presence of lead, arsenic, antimony, and other foreign metals in very minute quantities, suffices to render gold brittle; and very often the brittleness only becomes apparent after the bullion has been alloyed with copper, and the metal has reached an advanced stage in the operation of coining. When this was the case, the Mint returned the impure metal to the Bank of England; in 1869, for instance, the bullion importers had no less than sixty-nine thousand ounces thrown back upon them, after the bars had passed the assay tests both at the Bank and the Mint itself, and been duly alloyed. The original melters naturally objected to bear such a loss, and a long correspondence ensued, which was at last brought to a satisfactory conclusion by Mr Roberts, the Mint chemist, discovering that, by passing a stream of chlorine gas through the molten metal, the gold was deprived of its brittleness at a very small expense, the materials for generating sufficient chlorine to toughen a thousand pound-worth of gold not costing more than a few shillings, while the loss of gold entailed in the operation is very trifling. In consequence of the successful result of Mr Roberts's experiments, the Mint no longer insists upon its right to send back gold bars found brittle in the process of coining, and all parties concerned are satisfied.

In 1853, a branch of the Royal Mint was established at Sydney, and gold coins issued by it declared a legal tender in the United Kingdom. Another branch has been set up at Melbourne, but has not yet commenced operations. The Australian sovereigns hitherto distinguished by bearing on their reverse a wreath enclosing the word 'Australia,' are henceforth to be struck of a similar pattern to those manufactured at the parent establishment, but bearing as Mint marks the letters S and M (according as they hail from Sydney or Melbourne) above the rose at the foot of the design on the reverse. The Sydney Mint was opened in May 1855: up to the end of 1869, it had issued L.24,697,500 in sovereigns, L.1,629,500 in half-sovereigns, and gold bars value L.1,687,544; the total value of its issues being L.28,014,544. The value of the gold bullion and gold dust received in the same period was L.28,049,050—New South Wales being credited with L.16,387,387, New Zealand with L.5,308,132, Victoria with L.5,052,934, Queensland with L.1,193,063, Tasmania with L.8268, California with L.8225, while British Columbia only contributed L.759.

## CECIL'S TRYST.

### CHAPTER IX.—A TRAGEDY AFTER A FARCE.

At breakfast the next morning, not only was Lady Repton, as usual, absent, but Jane kept her room, as she had done throughout the preceding day, still troubled with her headache. I am afraid this did not interfere with the merriment of our party, reinforced as it was by the presence of Eleanor, whom we had bespoken for the entire day. Nothing, of course, was talked about but the afternoon's rehearsal, and quotations from the play were frequent, which, interspersed with ordinary talk, had a comic effect enough. To my father, however, must be adjudged the palm of electrifying the company, and especially Aunt Ben, by his applica-

tion, to my own unhappy condition as playwright, of these lines from Marlowe's *Faustus*, uttered suddenly in sad and sonorous tones:

O Frederick!

Now hast thou but six bare hours to live,  
And then thou wilt be damned perpetually.

Though spoken in jest, these words did not tend to remove the nervousness which had taken possession of me, and it was with a ghastly grin that I acknowledged the sally. Mere gibes and jokes, so long as they did not take this Cassandra shape, I did not mind; which was fortunate, for no one spared me. Cecil boldly addressed the most affectionate speeches to Eleanor before my face, under the borrowed shield of Bois-Guilbert; and Lady Repton lavished upon Cecil all the tenderness (and something more) with which I had endowed Rowena. Then she would turn to me, and ejaculate: 'Poor faithful fool!' with such contemptuous pity that Aunt Ben got quite indignant upon my account. When Frank Close arrived, and we all put on our costumes, the fun became positively uproarious. His head-gear was so much too large for him that his eyes, which should have 'flashed fire through his visor bars,' were lost somewhere between that spot and his mouthpiece, so that he could see nothing, and had to be led about. As for me in my salmon suit, I was thoroughly ashamed of myself, and looked very much of the same colour as my apparel. Frank Close, too, whose humour was of a practical turn, did not mend matters—and, indeed, he did precisely the reverse, for he made a hole in my inexpressibles—by perpetually prodding my unprotected limbs with his sword. The three male characters of the drama, indeed, were faint and sore with laughter before they emerged from the 'green-room' and presented themselves to the public eye. Our two actresses excited nothing but admiration, while their costumes were perfection. Lady Repton really looked superb, notwithstanding that the remorseless light of day fell full upon her; and the beauty of Rebecca was (as Rowena herself confessed) such as to have excused any indiscretion on the part of the Templar.

Ah me! what a bright joyous time it was! How full of jest and gaiety, a day wherein Youth, Love, and Friendship made holiday together, and asked Wit to join them!

And yet we could scarce have been more merry or better pleased among ourselves than were those who came to gaze upon our show—the farmers of the parish, with their wives. Stout Fiveacres, whose family had held the self-same farm for centuries, and yet who was, I verily believe, the very first of them who ever saw a play; young Bargate from the Glebe House, with his bride of three days old, whom this unprecedented attraction had withdrawn thus early from her modest seclusion; and old Braintree, from whom all his race had dropped away, except the little blue-eyed grandchild, whom he had asked special leave to bring: 'She would take up no room,' he said, 'as she always sat upon his knee.'

Not until the company had all assembled did Cousin Jane appear and take her seat in the front row beside my father. She looked ill and pale, and also nervous, as I had never seen her before.

'Your cousin appears anxious,' remarked Lady Repton.



'Yes,' said I; 'she is afraid of Cecil's coming to grief in his part, which I am sure she need not be.'

'Nay, I think she is afraid of the piece itself not going off as it should do,' answered her Ladyship silyly.

'I am sure that is not it,' said I, 'for she was opposed to our having the play from the beginning.'

'Yes; for two reasons: first, because you take the jester's part, which she considers inconsistent with your dignity; and secondly, because Eleanor plays with you. What a terrible young fellow you are, to have thus involved three innocent young creatures—for you know how I dote upon you—in your wicked meshes!'

Her lively Ladyship retained her own opinion on this point, as was usual with her; but although she had been the first to open my eyes to Cousin Jane's *penchant* for myself, I felt convinced she was wrong in this particular instance. Jane's present anxiety was certainly upon Cecil's account, not mine. Her eyes followed his every movement; her ears seemed to await his words alone, throughout the play; and so far from my being chagrined at her want of interest in the drama itself, I felt more favourably towards her in consequence. Whatever might be urged against Cousin Jane, it was certain that she really loved 'Old Cecil' (as I affectionately termed him), and was demonstrative enough in all that concerned him.

At what precise part of the representation it happened, I cannot tell, for the shock of subsequent occurrences destroyed all recollection of such details, but it was at a point when all the *dramatis personæ* were on the stage together, that a strange sensation seemed to affect the servants on the staircase, which, as I have said, served the purpose of a gallery. At first there was only whispering and crowding together; but presently one of them—it was Anne, the parlour-maid—stood up, and looked towards my father nervously. All eyes in the body of the hall, including his own, were, however, fixed upon ourselves.

'Master—sir!' said Anne.

My father looked up, in common with every one else, at this unexpected interruption, except Cousin Jane, who still kept her eyes fixed upon her brother, at that moment on his knees before Rowena, and even when he looked round, she never turned her head.

'What is the matter?' asked my father gravely.

'The house is on fire; I knew it would be, Fred,' cried Aunt Ben reproachfully.

(Considering that our entertainment was an afternoon performance, and of course without footlights, it was rather unreasonable in her to attribute such a misfortune to my poor drama.)

'No, sir,' said Anne; 'it's not fire. But a terrible accident has happened at the sand-cliff; and I thought I ought to tell you.'

'To whom?' cried Cecil.

Even in that moment of increased excitement, it seemed to strike the company as strange that Cecil should have put the question instead of my father; perhaps it was the feverish anxiety of his voice, so different from the tones of tender passion in which he had just been addressing Rowena, but, at all events, Anne turned to him, as though she had known he was the person chiefly interested.

'It's the Wallers' pit, Mr Cecil, over against Wayford'—

The next instant there was a sharp clang of the

door, and Cecil was gone. The whole audience rose at once, almost all of them to hurry to the scene of the catastrophe. My father and Aunt Ben remained only to collect the few articles which their experience had shewn to be useful in such emergencies, and the *dramatis personæ* to disencumber themselves of their stage-clothes. Even in that moment of distress and alarm, it was not without a sense of humorous absurdity that I found myself a prisoner in the salmon-coloured suit. I could obtain nobody's aid to undo the two buttons behind, and, in that hateful apparel, it was utterly impossible that I could present myself on the cliff terrace at such a time. It would have been a hundred times worse than going to a funeral in hunting costume. At last I procured a knife, and cut it open down the front (just as the Japanese disembowel themselves), and so got out. Then at full speed I followed, and soon passed, the rest of the hurrying throng. In the avenue lay Ivanhoe's long palmer's cloak, which poor Cecil had cast off as he ran. I could see his white shirt-sleeves, as he sped along the terrace like a deer, at least half a mile ahead of me. In front of the place where Richard and Ruth Waller usually worked, I could also see a dark knot of men and women—a funeral group which seemed already to speak of death. As I drew nearer, I found these standing around the pit-mouth in a semicircle, within which, just as I arrived, a man came out from the pit with a barrowful of earth, which he emptied very hastily, and then returned. The faces of all expressed an intense anxiety and grief—not the mere curiosity which is too often the feeling chiefly recognisable in the onlookers at tragic scenes: not one of those present but had had cause to bewail a similar catastrophe on their own account, or on that of their kinsfolk.

'On whom has the pit fallen?' inquired I of one who had already stripped his coat off, in readiness to take his turn at the work within, though he was an old man too.

'On Richard Waller and his sister, sir.'

'Good God!' cried I. 'What! on Ruth?' I looked round nervously for Cecil, but he had disappeared.

'Yes, indeed, sir; though we trust the lass is not so far in but that she can be reached in time. That little lad there' (pointing to a pale-faced child, who was crying bitterly) 'was helping a bit with the barrow, when he heard the fall, and ran out to tell us. It was lucky—if anything can be called lucky in such an affair—that he was there to hear it, or we should not have known what had happened until it was too late.'

'Then you think,' asked I eagerly, 'that it is not too late now?'

'Not for the lass, sir—no; though I fear poor Richard is done for. From what the lad says, I reckon Ruth was only just beyond the props when the sand came down.'

'Beyond the props!' cried I, in amazement. 'How could that be?'

'Heaven only knows, sir; though I do fear that the drink which has led poor Richard to spend his substance, has at last cost him his life.'

'You don't mean to say that Richard Waller sold his props for drink, when he knew that his sister was to share his risk?' cried I, indignantly.



'I know nothing certain, sir, except that drink will make a man sell anything, including, as Parson Bourne says, his own soul; and, at all events, the props are gone, or how could you have happened?'

Here the barrow-man came out, looking white and exhausted, and was immediately relieved by another hand; and a few minutes afterwards a second man emerged from the pit, for whom another was similarly substituted on the instant. Not a single second was lost. There was a total silence now, the slight commotion caused by the coming up of the party from the Manor-house having ceased. My father was standing in the inner ring of spectators, with a little pile of blankets beside him, and a bottle of brandy; one finger was in his waistcoat-pocket, where, as I well knew, a lancet lay. Aunt Ben stood beside him with a roll of bandages, not crying, as many of the women were, but wearing such an expression of divine pity as made her homely features almost beautiful. Eleanor, who had silently made her way to my side, wore also a calm face, but trembled excessively. Suddenly the man with whom I had already spoken observed coolly: 'Your Cousin Cecil digs well, sir; don't he? He's been longer in than any of 'em, and the barrow still comes out as quick as ever.'

'Is Cecil in the pit?' asked I in wonder, not unmixed with alarm.

'Yes, surely. He came up just as the third turn was called, and dashed in with the spade like a good un. He's used to the work, it seems; but he must be nearly spent by this time.'

'What a noble fellow!' ejaculated a sweet, low voice behind me. I turned, and saw Lady Repton: the tenderness of her woman's heart made her fair face woeful, and shewed its lines, but I liked it better so than I had ever done before.

'Fred. would dig too, if he knew how,' said Eleanor, taking, I suppose, her Ladyship's observation as a reflection upon my own inactivity, which I am sure it was not intended to be.

'Yes,' said I, 'I would do so willingly, but I should be a hindrance rather than a help; whereas Cecil'—

Here I stopped abruptly. To tell how Cecil had learned to use the spade, would have been at once to disclose, at least to one of those two, the motive that was now giving such unwonted vigour to his arm. As I thought of that, I looked round for Jane, but she was nowhere to be seen. I felt glad of this, on all accounts, but in the first place, because she would naturally have been much alarmed at her brother's perilous position; for there *was* very considerable peril in it. The spadesman in such cases was, of course, the most advanced of the workers; for though, as he dug, it was the duty of the proper to make all safe behind him, he was by no means unlikely to be caught by a new fall of sand; and especially this would be the case if his anxiety to effect a rescue should make him incautious; and was Cecil likely to be prudent, digging as he was for something that, in his eyes, was dearer far than buried treasure in those of a miser! Every breath that was now lent to him might eke out the scanty stock of it in his beloved Ruth; for the theory of the poor girl's position, based on the firm ground of experience, was this, that if alive at all, if not hopelessly crushed and smothered, she must be in some confined spot, the

air of which must needs be speedily exhausted. She had certainly not been killed outright by the first fall—I say first, because there were generally more than one in such cases—since the little boy had heard a muffled cry of 'Help!' from her after the pit had caved in. Perhaps, even now, that cry was ringing in poor Cecil's ears within there! It could not do so much longer, that was certain. I saw old Mr Bourne take out his great silver watch, ask some question of his son—doubtless as to the time the accident had happened—and then shake his head despondingly: this was followed by a sorrowful murmur from the crowd, as though that expression of the old man's opinion had found an audible echo.

Suddenly a voice was heard within the pit, and every eye began to twinkle with anxiety, every head to crane forward.

'Back, back!' cried my father in authoritative tones; 'leave plenty of space round the pit's mouth.' As the crowd mechanically obeyed him, the barrow-man came running out without his customary load. 'They are coming!' he exclaimed, then took his place in the mass of onlookers.

No one asked *who* were coming; but a party in the back-ground, who had been engaged in forming a couple of litters, or it might be biers, out of firm-poles, now came forward with them; while the blankets were spread out ready for instant use. It was an awful moment: dear Eleanor stole her trembling arm in mine, as if for support; and Lady Repton placed her little hand upon a pitman's shoulder. If a thunderbolt had fallen on the terrace, it would scarcely, I verily believe, have at that moment drawn away our gaze from the cave-mouth, on which all eyes were riveted. The propman had already made his appearance; and now came Cecil, tottering under the weight of a burden scarce more ghastly than himself—the corpse, as it seemed, of beautiful Ruth Waller. Her face, like his, was white and damp; her long black hair trailed over her shoulders, and mixed with his, and both were clotted with sand. But while his limbs shook beneath him, hers hung down limp and lifeless; and while his laboured breathing could be heard by the most distant spectator, Rue did not seem to breathe at all.

'Next turn!' cried old Mr Bourne, and instantly the work within the cave commenced again; but for my part I had neither eyes nor ears except for Cecil and Ruth. The thought that Richard Waller had brought this misery on his innocent sister, steeled my heart against him, even in that bitter hour—for which I had afterwards cause for shame.

Ruth was set down on the blankets; and my father knelt down on one side of her, and Aunt Ben on the other, while Cecil, kneeling at her feet, gazed at her shut white face with unspeakable tenderness and agony.

'Hush!' You could hear the wood-pigeon's murmur in the distant firs, and the flow of the far-off river, as my father leaned down his ear and listened for her breathing.

'She lives!' said he, looking up to us with tender gravity.

'Thank God!' ejaculated the rector solemnly.

I am sure that most of us did thank Him. It would have indeed been hard if cruel Death had snatched so fair a form, and laid it in the grave for a bridal bed.

But though not dead, Ruth was quite insensible,

or, rather, she knew nothing of what was happening about her, for suddenly she cried out 'A spade, a spade!' doubtless filled with some vague sense of the fate she had so narrowly escaped. It was, of course, not to be thought of that she should be taken to her own cottage, that would presently receive for its only other inmate the dead body of her brother (for although the pitmen in no way relaxed their efforts to save him, we all felt that *his case was hopeless*); and I saw Aunt Ben whisper to my father, who threw a troubled look towards Cecil. She had doubtless proposed that the poor girl should be taken to the Manor-house.

'The Rectory is nearer,' suggested Nelly boldly, yet without venturing to glance in the direction of her grandfather, whose countenance at this proposition began to evince stronger feeling than it had yet shewn throughout the whole affair. He was understood to murmur something about the spare bed not being aired.

'She shall have my bed,' said Nelly; and with that, poor Ruth, who had already been laid upon the litter, was about to be borne away.

'Stop!' cried Cecil, speaking for the first time, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the nearest bearer. 'That is my place, if you please;' and the man gave way, and he took his place accordingly.

I can see the whole scene now, as though it were before my very eyes. Cecil's grave quickness, and the bearer's stolid wonder; my father's pained surprise, and the amazement and interest of all the rest, so great, that, in spite of the tragedy that was simultaneously taking place, it expressed itself in murmurs; then the little procession slowly moving off with even pace along the noiseless sand, and Eleanor walking by Ruth Waller's side with her cold hand in hers.

#### CHAPTER X.—JANE FAINTS.

Not till an hour had elapsed after Ruth's rescue, was her unhappy brother brought forth from the pit that had been his grave. It was evident, from the appearance of the body, that he had long been a dead man, and we all hoped that the fall which had overwhelmed him had slain him on the spot. This, however, as it turned out, had not been the case. In a day or two, Ruth was sufficiently recovered to narrate the circumstances of the catastrophe, and they were such as amazed and shocked our little community, even more than the event itself.

When her brother and herself went to work as usual on that morning, they had found that, except from a few yards of passage at the entrance, the whole of the props supporting the roof had been removed. The idea that Richard himself had made away with them for the purpose of supplying himself with the means of purchasing drink, was one that had not even occurred to his sister; nor was it afterwards ever suggested to her, since the fact itself seemed abundantly disproved by her evidence, corroborated as it was by that of the little boy, her assistant. Richard Waller had expressed himself with too much vehemence and indignation against the author of the heartless theft, to be suspected of being himself the culprit: his nature was anything but hypocritical; it was, on the contrary, rash and impulsive, as was fatally evidenced by his conduct on the occasion in question; which at the same time convinced us

that we had done him wrong in attributing to him a selfish disregard of his sister's safety. 'Prop or no prop,' he had passionately exclaimed, 'I do my work to-day as usual; and if anything happens to me, my blood be on the villain's head that has done this thing! But as for thee, lass,' he had added, 'keep thou within the props, with the boy.'

In vain Ruth had endeavoured to combat this rash resolve. Early as it was, the unhappy man had already partaken of strong liquor, and was in no condition to be argued with, while the theft of the props had excited him beyond control. All that his poor sister could do was to keep as near to him as possible, in order to give him warning of impending peril, though her doing so angered him exceedingly, and more than once he had driven her back with words that she now trembled to recall. 'If Mr Cecil had only been with me, *as usual*,' the poor half-conscious girl had pitifully complained to Nelly (and by that phrase had told her all), 'he would have compelled Richard to take heed.' She had taken great care, however, to keep the child well within the covered gallery, and given him instructions as to what to do in case of any mischance; which he afterwards most fortunately carried out with promptitude. When the accident occurred, she had her back towards her brother, and was carrying away a basket of sand—poor Rue never used the barrow, because the handling of it spoiled her hands—for the boy to take without, and empty; and the sudden extinction of her brother's candle was the first indication she received of what had happened. Immediately afterwards, a dull 'thud,' as she expressed it, rang in her ears, and she was herself knocked down by the descent of the sand. In neither case, as it seemed, had the sides given way (as is most usual in such calamities), but a portion of the roof itself had fallen in block; the mass that had buried Ruth was partly supported by the basket of sand, beside which she lay; and to its scanty protection she doubtless owed her preservation. Though much bruised by the blow, and greatly oppressed by the superincumbent weight, she did not lose consciousness, and could distinctly hear her brother's pitiful moans. The sand had fallen on him in a wedge-shaped mass, and thereby protracted his sufferings for a brief interval, by allowing him space wherein to breathe. She was so near to him, notwithstanding the dense barrier between them, that she could even overhear him call to her in muffled tones, and utter the fragments of a prayer. Prone on the damp earth, in total darkness, and with the expectation of instant death, the sound of his voice, she said, shot to her a ray of comfort. She had endeavoured to reply to him, but the sand choked her, while the effort to speak gave her intense pain. 'I am a murdered man,' she heard him say; and then there was a second and greater fall of earth, 'as though the whole cliff had come down upon him.' Then all was silent as the grave.

After what seemed an eternity of time, she heard the strokes of the pick and spade, but these, though in reality approaching her, appeared to grow duller and duller, and presently altogether ceased. She had, in fact, become unconscious, and was probably on the very threshold of death, when Cecil's pickaxe let in the air, and revived her. She did not know even now that it was he who had rescued her, nor did she speak of him at all, with the single

exception I have mentioned. Her whole thoughts seemed to be fixed on her dead brother, upon the cause of whose sad fate she was incessantly speculating. He had not had an enemy in the world, so far as she knew, and yet she did not need his dying words to be convinced that the theft of the props had been committed of *malice prepense*; that whoever had stolen them counted on his well-known imprudence inducing him to work on as usual, and had thereby compassed his death. What confirmed this view of the case with us all (in spite of our unwillingness to adopt so harsh a theory), was, that the stolen props themselves were discovered in an open space of the wood above the cave, so that they had certainly not been taken for the sake of the few shillings they would have fetched in the 'pit' market.

This important question greatly occupied all minds, especially those of the local magistracy, of which old Mr Bourne and my father were both members. The latter, as I well knew (though he kept silence on the subject), was also full of anxious thought concerning Cecil, whose conduct since the catastrophe was even more significant with respect to Ruth than it had been on the occasion of her rescue. He called at the Rectory twice a day, to inquire how she was progressing; and scoured the country round, in the character of an amateur detective, in hopes to gain some clue that might lead to the discovery of the culprit. Curiously enough, not a word of remonstrance passed his sister's lips, though she could not but have been aware of his proceedings. Perhaps she was rather more reserved and morose in manner than before, but that might have arisen from physical causes, since her indisposition still continued, though not so severely as to confine her to her own room. No one liked to speak of recent events in her presence, because of the share her brother had had in them, and yet we could think of little else. Our theatricals had been put an end to because of them, for Cecil had declined to act; and the gaiety of our little party was utterly quenched. Lord and Lady Repton took their departure on the very day that was to have been witness to the entertainment of the county at the Theatre Royal, Gatcombe; and her Ladyship, I verily believe, was more disappointed at the withdrawal of the piece than was its author himself. For my part, my apprehensions upon Cecil's account swallowed up all minor causes of melancholy: the present distress was, I felt only too well convinced, but the prelude to some grave occurrence which was likely to throw no temporary shadow on our home-life. The preparations for the inquest at present gave my father an excuse for silence; he was probably averse to speak to Cecil while the latter was so full of excitement (for Ruth herself was still in a somewhat critical condition), but it was impossible that the *éclaircissement* could be long deferred. What the end of it all would be, it was difficult to guess, but the affair looked gloomy from every point of view for all of us; while as for me, I was only too sensible that any knowledge of Cecil's headstrong attachment was taken for granted, and that for the first time in my life I had grievously displeased my father.

The coroner's inquest took place at Holksham, a small town half way to Monkton, where the magistrates' meeting was wont to be held once a fortnight; and the finding was one which, if not

legally justified by the fact, was still only what might have been expected from the heated state of the public mind, greatly aggravated as it was by the excited testimony of Ruth herself. The jury adopted her unfortunate brother's last words, and returned a verdict of 'Wilful murder against some person, or persons, unknown.' My father was not present; but Cecil and I had attended throughout the proceedings, and the former evinced great satisfaction at the result of the inquiry. 'If ever there was a man who deserved hanging,' observed he, in the drawing-room that evening, with a vehemence that was quite unusual with him, 'it was the man who brought the cliff down upon poor Richard Waller.' My father quietly combated this opinion: he allowed, of course, that if there had been any intention to do him hurt, the crime was of the deepest dye; but if the props had been merely stolen to make money of them, and considering that nine men out of ten would have desisted from work upon discovery of their loss, he thought the offence could not be stretched so far. We all listened to this controversy in embarrassed silence; for we knew what underlay the feelings of both disputants, and had an uneasy apprehension that Ruth's name might presently be mentioned by one of them. Cecil was greatly excited, and indeed, if that had not been the case, he would not have contended with my father at all, whom he always treated with a respect approaching to reverence. Aunt Ben's fingers trembled so excessively that she laid down her knitting, and took up a certain *History of the Drama* which had been given to her by Lady Repton. She had religiously tried to get through it during her Ladyship's stay, but Cecil had mischievously put back her book-marker daily, so that she always began at the fifteenth page or so, and unconsciously went over the same ground; but on this occasion she did not progress even so much as usual, for she held the volume upside down. Cousin Jane was apparently devoted to her Chinese puzzle; but I noticed that the same piece was retained in her hand, and never put down, with such rapt attention was she listening to what was being said.

'If Richard Waller had not an enemy in the world, my dear Cecil,' continued my father, 'the *malice prepense* which constitutes "murder" could not have existed. The verdict, therefore, is evidently incorrect and strained.'

'But he might have had an enemy without knowing it,' argued Cecil: 'there have been cases of that kind before now.'

'That is true,' said my father gravely: 'some men have their worst enemies in those that seem to be dearest to them.'

At this, Aunt Ben's book dropped out of her hand. (She afterwards told me it made her so 'all of a pug,' that, if she had had her knitting-needles, they would certainly have been rusted.) Most happily, however, as it appeared to us all, Cecil did not reply. The discussion seemed over for that evening. My father took up Ben Jonson; and Cecil went to the piano, and 'picked out' a tune. He was not so good a performer on that instrument as on the flute, but he played fairly, and with feeling; after a little, he struck into his favourite melody, *And ye shall walk in Silk Attire*. It was curious that he should have chosen it on that occasion, since the moral of the piece

in question is certainly opposed to unequal marriages; but perhaps it recommended itself to him on that very account, just as a man who is quite certain of his own logical position is not averse to quote the arguments of his opponents.

In the middle of it, my father laid down his book, and suddenly exclaimed: 'Cecil, I want to speak to you.'

My cousin stopped his tune at once, but remained sitting on the music-stool; while my father stood up, with his back to the mantel-piece. We all knew what was coming.

'I had intended, my dear boy, to have our talk out to-night in private, in my study; but, upon second thoughts, I think it better to address you in the presence of those who love you, and whom you love, that they may add their entreaties—if entreaties should be necessary—to mine. I need hardly waste time in asking you, Cecil, what has unhappily been made of late so abundantly manifest, whether it is true that you have formed a serious attachment to Ruth Waller; and yet I will not take it for granted. Is it true?'

'It is quite true, sir,' returned Cecil firmly, and looking fixedly in my father's face.

'May I ask how long this has been the case, for it has been kept from me altogether until within these few days'—here my father turned a reproachful glance on me—'a want of confidence which I should not have expected.'

'I beseech you, sir, do not be angry with Fred,' pleaded Cecil earnestly: 'he has only been silent for your sake. He would have told you all months ago, but for my threat that, if he did so, I would marry Ruth at once, as I most surely would have done. It is I alone who am to blame; not he, nor Ruth.' Here he looked towards his sister half defiantly; and I fully expected to hear her make some contemptuous reply, but she kept silence, her devotion to her puzzle becoming more assiduous than ever.

'Do I understand you to mean, Cecil,' continued my father very gravely, 'that it is your final resolve to marry this girl?—One moment before you answer. Let me premise that I have no authority over you whatsoever, by your father's will, the use of which could prevent your putting such a scheme into practice; I have no menace to employ of any sort. You are your own master, except as regards money matters; and even in that respect I shall exercise no power to your disadvantage.'

I saw Aunt Ben give a glance of remonstrance at my father; and Jane's forehead darken, as she bent lower over her little table; while, on the other hand, Cecil's resolute expression softened—it was still decisive, but the decision was mingled with tenderness.

'You are far too sensible,' continued my father, 'and I will say also, notwithstanding what you now propose, far too unselfish, not to have set before yourself some of the consequences that must ensue to others in case of your committing this act of—well—imprudence. But I think some have escaped your attention. It has been the endeavour of your aunt and myself to make you feel this house to be your home'—

'It has—it has, indeed, sir,' interrupted Cecil gently. 'I have felt it deeply.'

'I am sure you have, my dear lad; but it has not struck you that it can never be the home of

Ruth Waller. It has not occurred to you, that in marrying her you will not only give up your *own* position in society—not a great sacrifice, you will say, perhaps: well, you will not think so ten years hence; but it is not worth while to argue that matter—but also that of your sister. I say nothing of the pain and distress that such an alliance must needs cause to my own little household. I am not a man to attach undue importance to birth and station, but I confess'—Here he stopped, and pointed significantly to poor Aunt Ben, who was dissolved in tears. 'We shall get over it in time, you think, and perhaps we shall: at all events, we are old, and it is only natural, perhaps, that what concerns your whole future life should have more weight with you, than considerations for what may seem to you our temporary convenience. But Jane, remember, is no older than yourself, and let me tell you that you will be putting her in a most disadvantageous position, as respects her prospects, by allying yourself to this girl. Do not imagine, my dear lad, that I am underrating your temptation. It has well been said, that

The treasures of the deep are not so precious  
As are the concealed comforts of a man  
Locked up in woman's love.

I use no arguments about thoughtless passion and love's quick satiety, because you will only smile at them. It seems to you, I know, that Beauty will keep her lustrous eyes, and Young Love pine after them for ever; but I appeal to the very heart from which that love (if it be worth anything) upsprings. Do not sacrifice your sister's prospects, for the gratification—I do not say of your own happiness, for you will not be happy, my poor lad—but of your present pleasure.'

'How do I sacrifice my sister's prospects, uncle?' inquired Cecil quietly.

'In this way, my boy. All young women naturally look forward to the time when they shall have a home of their own—in other words, to marriage. Jane is not an heiress independent of circumstances, and the fact of your having made an ignoble alliance would most certainly greatly prejudice her future.'

'I see,' replied Cecil softly.—'Heaven forbid that any act of mine should harm you, Jane!' and here he glanced towards his sister lovingly. 'As regards fortune, since our dear uncle has alluded to it, I may tell you that it both was and is my intention to do away, so far as I have power to do so, with the inequality between us in that respect.' He stopped a moment; and for the first time, Cousin Jane looked up, and, with a faint smile, seemed to acknowledge his generosity; then shot a glance towards me, to the meaning of which, thanks to Lady Repton, I could not be blind: 'I shall be rich, you hear,' it seemed to say.

'Every one that knows you, Cecil,' struck in my father with tenderness (and indeed it is impossible that his manner throughout could have been more carefully framed to conciliate, and not to wound), 'will credit you with generous impulses; but, in the first place, it will not be so easy to do for your sister as you propose, effectually; and secondly, there will still remain the fact, that you, her brother, have married a labourer's daughter, a labourer's sister, a girl with low connections'—

'Pardon me, uncle,' interrupted Cecil; 'Ruth has no relative, that can be called such, *now*. A



few days ago, I allow, your argument would have had more force. I was not unconscious, as Fred. will tell you—indeed, I felt most acutely—that Richard Waller—was a—a grievous obstacle, in short, to my own selfish views; though, Heaven knows, I wished him no harm; he is dead, poor fellow! and that obstacle has been removed.' He stopped again, and in the silence we heard the front-door bell violently ring. 'As for Ruth herself, sir, you do not know her; she is not the dull village girl that you imagine her to be. Perhaps a day will come when you will not only confess as much, but even not be ashamed to receive her, as others will, I am persuaded, as my wife, and as a true lady, though not so by birth. Lady Repton, as I have heard, sir, was not born a lady.'

'My dear lad,' said my father, 'these are dreams.'

'Still, I live in them, and cannot live without them,' answered Cecil softly, and yet with a certain dignity, that to me at least seemed very touching. 'I am most grieved to oppose myself to you, whom I respect and honour, and whom I would lay down my life to serve; but Ruth is dearer to me than my life.'

His fingers, which still rested on the keys, seemed mechanically to produce the last verse of the song he had been playing:

And ere I'm found to break my faith,  
I'll lay me down and dee.

My father looked very grave, and was about again to speak, when the door opened, and the parlour-maid entered hurriedly.

'O sir, please, sir,' said she nervously, 'there's somebody wants to see you.'

'I can see nobody just now,' was my father's stern rejoinder; indeed, I had never heard him speak so harshly, his manner to all his servants being always gentle in the extreme.

'But, please, sir, it's most particular,' urged the girl, frightened by her master's manner, but still more frightened, as it seemed, by the intelligence she had to communicate.

'Let him come to-morrow morning; or, if you know his business, state it.'

'Well, sir—O dear! O dear!—it's the parish constable, and he's been and found the murderer!'

We jumped up from our seats—all, that is, save one of us: Cousin Jane fell back in hers with a sharp shrill cry, and fainted away.

#### THE FAIR CIRCASSIAN.

NAMES which became familiar to us during the Crimean war have again faded into strangeness, since that struggle has been crushed back into insignificance, and almost into oblivion, by the mightier military and political events of the intervening years. A yachting voyage made by some English ladies, and related by one of them,\* pleasantly refreshes our memory of the places which were once so painfully interesting, and affords us many glimpses into the life of distant and little-known peoples.

The *Claymore* made an ambitious and adventurous cruise. We became acquainted with her, as,

having rounded the point opposite Scutari, she comes on under the influence of the morning breeze, and casts anchor at the entrance of the Golden Horn, which Mrs Harvey, with courageous truthfulness, of which her book offers numerous examples, describes as 'ugly' and 'dirty.' We follow the *Claymore*, when her enterprising passengers have seen all there is to be seen in Constantinople, and its really Turkish quarter, Stamboul, all along the shores of the Bosphorus, whither she went meekly in the wake of a British man-of-war, which towed her up to Beyuk'dere, a village near the entrance of the Black Sea. The writer gives the following description of

How their shallop's golden keel  
Cleft the silver Bosphorus.

'This beautiful stream,' she says, 'is very unique in its characteristics; for, while the waters have the depth, brilliancy, and life of the sea, its shores are cultivated and wooded like the banks of a river. The gentle sloping hills are covered with dwelling-houses and kiosks, while the terraces and gardens of stately palaces line the shore. The Turks have much taste, and are also great lovers of flowers; the gardens, therefore, are well laid out, and generally well kept. The climate also is favourable, though the winters are cold, snow sometimes lying on the ground for many days. The beautiful American trumpet-creeper grows in perfection, and may be seen hanging over almost every garden-wall, its large bunches of orange-coloured flowers being in lovely contrast with the brilliant green foliage.' The cleanliness and beauty of the Turkish houses pleased the English ladies very much; and Mrs Harvey's account of their first visit to a harem, that of a powerful pacha, reminds one of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. But Mrs Harvey and her companions had no such vision as that which the witty ambassadress beheld, or at least described. The *hanoum* had been extolled to them as a famous beauty, still *à prétention*, about thirty-three, and they had pictured her to themselves handsome, graceful, and dignified. There entered, through lofty folding-doors, a woman apparently nearer sixty than thirty, very short, and enormously fat, who rolled rather than walked into the room, attired in the most extraordinary gown ever devised for the hampering and inconvenience of human limbs. It was a slight and slender garment, made of thin pink silk, open to the waist, very scanty in the skirt, and ending in three long tails, each about a yard wide, and which, passing on each side and between her feet, made walking very difficult. This dress was fastened round the waist by a white scarf; and the *hanoum* wore no stockings, only slippers, to indicate that she received the English ladies as equals and friends. Her head-dress was as unbecoming as her gown. Her hair was combed down straight on each side of her face, and then cut off short; and she had a coloured gauze handkerchief tied round her head. The eyebrows were painted with antimony, about the width of a finger, from the nose to the roots of the hair; and the eyes were blackened all round the lids. 'Had the face,' says Mrs Harvey, 'not been such an enormous size, it would have been handsome, for the eyes were large, black, and well shaped, and the complexion was fair and good; but the nose was too large, and the mouth was spoiled from there being no front teeth.' This disappointing personage proved to be a most

\* *Turkish Harems and Circassian Homes.* By Mrs Harvey (of Ickwell, Bury). Hurst and Blackett.

amiable, kindly, and intelligent lady, and did everything in her power to please and serve the strangers, and to facilitate their studies of Turkish life, of which they formed an estimate which would surprise many harmless enthusiasts desirous of extending the blessings of civilisation to the benighted Osmanli, who does not kill his wife, or even beat her; who maintains her authority supreme in the household, and holds himself degraded by any departure from profound respect for her; but who is, of course, a poor benighted creature, in the imagination of the British Ladies' Committees, with an indefinite number of wives and other domestic relations; who amuses himself with 'sacking' them in the Bosphorus, and, prior to that consummation, condemns them to a life of bead-stringing and sweetmeat-eating.

When they had been a few weeks at Constantinople, and had visited some half-dozen harems, the English ladies began to think they knew something about Turkish life; and it was not until they had been there several months, and had become acquainted with the families of most of the principal pachas, ministers, &c., that they discovered how little they really knew about it. The following is Mrs Harvey's testimony to the effect produced upon her by increased knowledge: 'Time and more intimate knowledge of their character only increased our liking and admiration for the Turks, both men and women. Benevolence and kindness are the chief characteristics of both sexes. During the whole period of our stay in Turkey, we never saw even a child ill-treat an animal. Travellers, especially women, are seldom sufficiently conversant with the laws of a country to be able to expatiate with much accuracy on such matters. Turkish laws are said to be bad; perhaps they are so, but certainly there are few cities in Europe where the streets can be so safely traversed, both by night and day, as those of Constantinople. Turkish manners, too, are peculiarly agreeable. Turks are not ashamed to shew that they wish to please, and have not yet adopted that brusquerie of manner which is becoming so prevalent in the West. Even in the seclusion of home, the master of a family is treated with a respectful deference which would astonish many Christian sons, who, unhappily, often now only look upon their father as the purse-holder, out of whom they must wring as much money as possible.' They found the Turkish ladies, especially of the imperial family, intelligent, gentle, kind, and friendly, and had frequent opportunities of observing the absurd fallacy of the popular notion of their degradation of intellect and want of influence. There are tragedies in Turkish domestic life, no doubt—it is said that occasionally an erring odalisk disappears, and no troublesome questions are asked; but the records of our English police courts ought to prevent such contemptible folly as our boasting of a superior civilisation in these respects.

The *Claymore* accomplished her coasting-voyage well, and the travellers landed at Eupatoria, a place which, with its inhabitants, was peculiarly repulsive to them, after the delicate cleanliness of Turkish houses and people. Men, women, and houses looked as if water had been a luxury unknown to them from the beginning of all things. 'Oil was everywhere—on the walls, in the clothes, in the air, even on the ground. One would have

expected to see it running in the gutters, could anything run here, but everything liquid seems to stagnate, and turn into sticky mud.' The wretched little town, which Mrs Harvey describes after a fashion which recalls the thriving city of Eden, as it appeared in reality, stands in the midst of a gloomy desert of sand, stretching away on either side to an apparently limitless extent, and without a tree or house to break its dull uniformity. Such as the fortune of the place is, it is made by a few huts, like sentry-boxes, scattered along the shore. 'These are the famous mud-baths, well known in the Crimea, and resorted to during the summer, from all parts of Southern Russia, by persons afflicted with skin-diseases, and especially with one sad malady, for which these baths are peculiarly efficacious. This complaint consists in the skin becoming so thin, that the slightest exertion may cause hemorrhage to take place from any or all parts of the body; a wasting consumption being thus produced, which usually ends fatally. The patient lies for some hours every day in the soft, healing, muddy water, which, by degrees, makes a sort of artificial coating, by leaving the sediment upon the body. The skin is thus protected until it can regain its proper health and thickness.' The people are wretched, slavish, and joyless-looking, and the surroundings simply desolation and fleas. The arid plain is half-marsh half-sand, and during the winter lies partially under water. Here and there may be seen a patch of reedy grass, with a two-humped Bactrian camel feeding on it.

The travellers journeyed through the Crimea, visiting all the historical places, and after a brief stay at Yalta, embarked for Circassia, it being a three days' sail, with favourable weather, to the nearest point of that superb coast, where, however, they dared not land, as this part of the country is held by the hostile Circassians, who wage an incessant guerrilla war with the Russians. Whenever they have a chance, they make captures on account of the ransom they usually obtain. Should the prisoner be of any importance, he prefers paying a moderate sum, to enduring months of miserable imprisonment. As to the common soldiers—their value being small—they are usually shot! The travellers wisely determined not to run the risk of capture, though the temptation to land in such a scene as this must have been strong.

'There are some things so beautiful that one shrinks from describing them. Words cannot paint the loveliness that is seen by the eye. To say that we saw before us a country that possessed, with the tender charm of English woodland scenery, the rich glow of the Italian landscape, and the grand majesty of Alpine ranges, gives but a feeble idea of the delicious beauty of the land we were gazing on. The light, the colouring, the exquisite effect of the soft mists as they slowly arose from the valleys, cannot be described. The yacht was moving gently on; there was barely a ripple on the water, and seemingly we were within a stone's-throw of the shore. A little sandy beach ran along the edge of the sea, then rose banks all mossy and ferny, with undulating grass fields and conical hills, with great clumps of oak and beech trees scattered about. Then came a region of dark fir-woods, mingled with the tender green of the weeping birches. Farther away still were steep hills and rugged mountains, their sides

all covered with vast forests, stretching away far as the eye could reach; whilst above their dark shaggy masses rose the majestic peaks of a distant range, glistening white in their dazzling covering of eternal snow. Cattle and sheep were wandering over the rich pastures; but, peaceful as the country appeared, peace is the blessing most unknown to it. As the day drew to its close, the little breeze dropped, and the sea rested so calmly that not a ripple disturbed its mirror-like surface. The very forests slumbered in the sun. A pile of light fleecy clouds, that had been slowly flitting about all day, changed to a soft crimson, and floated on a sky that shaded from intense blue to the most brilliant rose-colour. Then a shower of gold seemed to fall, and the clouds changed into a long veil of pink vapour, that hung like a scarf over the snowy peaks of the distant mountains. As we watched this lovely shade, the sun sank below the horizon, a blaze of golden light shot up, the sea became deep purple, the snow-mountains gradually lost their rosy glow, and an unearthly pallor—beautiful, yet awfully like death—stole gently over the long line of peaks, growing paler and paler, until at length darkness hid the shore from our sight.

The *Claymore* has the honour of being the first vessel to fly the R. Y. S. flag at Soukoum-Kale. The excitement caused on shore in the little town, and on board a Russian transport and three ships of war in the harbour, was great, and when it transpired that ladies and children were on board, reached enthusiasm. The English consul came on board the yacht, and then the governor, the admiral, and their aides-de-camp arrived, and the travellers landed under their escort, upon a beach crowded with Russians and Circassians, many of the latter extremely wild-looking. Mrs Harvey instantly remarked their dignified bearing, and its contrast to the depressed appearance and careworn countenances of the Russians. They are mostly fine, tall men, with remarkably erect and graceful figures, intelligent faces, and large, dark, fiery eyes. In poverty and in rags, a Circassian retains his self-relying manner, and looks (what he generally is) a bold mountaineer, who, notwithstanding his nominal submission to a foreign power, preserves his liberty, and with gun and sword can defend his own against the world. The low, white, wooden town is pretty, and the surrounding scenery like the sunny glades in the Hampshire New Forest, diversified by herds of buffaloes crossing the paths, and groups of wild figures armed to the teeth, their dark eyes glittering fiercely from beneath their white hoods.

The extraordinary beauty of the place, a chief feature of which is the profuse vegetation, has a terrible per contra in its unhealthiness. Fever of a depressing and fatal sort rages there, the Circassians being too proud and too indolent to work, so that the soil is left waste, and the vegetation is unchecked, and malarious. It seems almost incredible, yet so it is, that in a country so rich and productive that a few hours' industry would insure an abundant harvest, *every* fruit and vegetable, including even potatoes, should be imported from Trebizonde. The Russian soldiers are the only agricultural labourers, and as their military duties in that much detested station are severe, the result is that only sufficient ground is cultivated to supply the horses with hay and forage. The

officers look upon service in the Caucasus as a banishment little less severe than being sent to Siberia. Indeed, the northern station has not the drawback of the fever, which no one can altogether escape.

The travellers pursued their delightful journey under safe escort through the unimaginable beauties of that marvellous province, on horseback. The record reads like that of an adventure in an enchanted country, where all that is awful is encountered without danger, and the sublime and beautiful are endlessly multiplied. Everywhere they experienced a grand and patriarchal hospitality. This virtue is highly esteemed, and largely practised by the upper class of Circassians. No greater praise can be awarded than to say that a man 'keeps forty tables.' The life of the English party in Soukoum was a curious mixture of wildness and civilisation. They passed their days in wild rides amidst the hills and mountains, the dash of danger that attended them enhancing the charm of scenery, magnificent in the sublimity of its savage grandeur, and exquisitely lovely in the tender beauty of its sequestered valleys and fern-clad forests. At eight the scene changed, and they were in the midst of an agreeable little society, where music, and dancing, and talking made the time pass quickly. The ladies of Prince Michael's family, though nominally Christians, retain many of their Mohammedan customs. They never appear in public unveiled, and though allowed to see their male relatives, they lead a very secluded life, apart from the men, passing their time in smoking, making sweetmeats, and arranging their dresses. They receive little or no education, and speak neither Russ nor any other European language.

The old, almost vanished, love of a wild and free life for its own sake, still lingers here, in the wonderful, terrible, beautiful Caucasus. From time to time the Czar summons some of the young men to St Petersburg. They there receive a certain amount of training and education; but the young princes are, with few exceptions, so devoted to the wild life they have been accustomed to lead amidst their native mountains, that going to St Petersburg is by no means popular. Serfdom in Circassia has not the galling power it possessed in Russia, but rather resembles clanship in Scotland in old times. Each man is proud of his connection with his chief, and the chief considers himself bound to protect and avenge the wrongs of his followers.

The Circassian women, concerning whom we have read such marvels, in prose and verse, are declared by Mrs Harvey to be not generally good-looking (though very great beauties are sometimes seen among them), and those of the Abasian province are decidedly plain. 'The national dress,' says the writer, 'does not heighten their charms. They usually wear loose Turkish trousers, made of white cotton, and a peculiarly frightful upper garment of some dark cloth, made precisely like the coats worn by High Church clergymen—tight and straight, and buttoned from the throat to the feet. A striped shawl is sometimes twisted round them like an apron. A blue gauze veil is thrown over the head, and their hair, which is generally long and thick, is worn in two heavy plaits that hang down behind. The beauties who obtain such great reputation in Constantinople and the West, almost invariably come from Georgia and the

valleys near El Berouz. In those districts the women have magnificent eyes and fair complexions.'

It has an odd effect to find Mrs Harvey lamenting that they had 'arrived *too late in the season* to see the good-looking girls'; and a still more odd effect when she explains this vexatious circumstance in the simple words, *they have all been sold*. Early in the year, the traders arrive from time to time, and Circassian parents do not object to dispose of their daughters for a consideration; they only do it with more candour and less cant than Belgravian parents. It is said that the 'moon-eyed' beauties themselves, far from making things unpleasant, are delighted to escape from the tedium of house-life, and to take their chance of being purchased by a rich pacha. For accidental parallels see the 'fashionable intelligence' *passim*.

The restless and passionate enmity cherished by the Circassians against Russia, does not exist among the Georgians, who are more amenable to foreign rule. The Georgians are more indolent, and less war-like than their neighbours in Circassia, and also have a great tie with Russia in being members of the same church. On the mysterious subject of the religion of the Circassians, Mrs Harvey says: 'Apparently they acknowledge no Supreme Being; they have no saints, nor do they observe any sacred days. Sometimes they sacrifice a chicken, though to whom, or for what, nobody knows. Some profess, however, a species of Mohammedanism, though they are absolutely disowned by all good Moslems, who consider such co-religionists a disgrace, and call them heretics and pagans of the worst description. They are among the few people in the world who make no use of ceremony, even on occasion of a marriage. A certain price having been covenanted for, the father takes his daughter to her new home, and there leaves her, having received the gun, or horse, for which she is considered the fair equivalent. A mountain woman is valuable, as she is an excellent beast of burden, and a very hard-working slave.'

The more the travellers saw of this wonderful country, the more they were enraptured with its beauties. But they were told it would be far more beautiful in spring, when the earth is closely carpeted with violets, narcissus, bluebells, cyclamen, and the many-coloured iris; while the sides of the hills glow with the red, pink, and lilac blossoms of the rhododendrons and azaleas. In this lovely region the atmosphere is so transparent that space seems almost annihilated. The eye travels far into the deep blue distance, tracing peak after peak in the wondrous clearness, until at length sky and mountain are blended into one line of quivering light; and the sight, fatigued with the magnitude and remoteness of objects on the vast horizon, seeks rest by gazing on the tender green of the fair valleys spread so invitingly around. Far, far away, glittering with dazzling whiteness, was the range of mighty snow-mountains, some of the nearer peaks frowning majestically above the sombre masses of the great pine forests that stretch for more than a hundred miles into the interior of the country.

With lingering regret, the travellers re-embarked on board the *Claymore*, and prepared for the navigation of the Black Sea, which proved even more dangerous than they had been led to expect. But the gallant *Claymore* also sustained her character, and the travellers reached the Bay of Therapea in safety.

#### THE BIRDS' NEST.

WHEN clouds hang low on moors and seas,  
Ere, deep in woods, anemones

Make twinkling firmaments for spring,  
The red-cheeked village children stray  
By hedges mossed with red and gray,

In whose green lights the linnets sing.  
O happy sound! if then be heard,  
Beneath some bough fresh-leaved and warm,  
The chirrup of a startled bird—

The quick wing apprehending harm;  
For there quick eyes are sure to find,  
In coyest ambushes of twigs,  
The rounded nest, the clustered twigs,  
Slow awaying to the pulsing wind.

Love was the architect who drew  
The lines symmetrical and true,  
And winged their substance from afar—  
From moist, sheep-whitened fields and brakes—  
From margins of reed-shadowed lakes,  
Gleaming below the crescent star.  
The sharp-plumed spear-grass tribute gave,  
The nettle yielded up its crown;  
And chased o'er field and freshet wave,  
Here came the captured thistledown,  
To build an airy palace fine,  
Where in the hours of moon and dew,  
The little birds might watch the blue,  
And all day long the sun might shine.

'Twas built; and in the twinkling shade  
Of branches crossed and diverse braid,  
The mother sat with brooding wings,  
Hearing from boughs that drooped above,  
Her mate's shrill canticle of love  
Descend in crystal twittersings.  
But he is hushed, and she has flown  
To some red gable, when she sees  
Her fairy chamber overthrown,  
With all its leafy pageantries.  
No full-fledged throat shall cheep to her  
What time along the flowered grass—  
One flash of mail—the bee shall pass,  
And cones grow golden on the fir.

Brown villagers, whose hands have rent  
The roof, the curtain of the tent,  
Too many a day shall grieve for this—  
Sad days, when never shall be heard  
The sweet bereavement of the bird  
From brake or pendent precipice!  
Then, when the Autumn red for corn,  
And knotted fagots, treads the woods—  
When fogs rise yellow through the morn,  
And all the land's a-wail with floods—  
You'll say in whispers tremulous:  
'Oh, had we spared the linnets' nest,  
Their brood upon our eaves might rest,  
And all the long day sing for us.'